



WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

40 Beecher Road – South
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D. – Superintendent

MEMORANDUM

TO: Woodbridge Board of Education Policy Committee

FROM: Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D., Superintendent

DATE: November 5, 2021

RE: Proposed New Policy 9273, "Civility"

Based on feedback from the October 7 meeting of the Policy Committee, please find attached a revision of proposed new Policy 9273, "Civility." This revision adds references (see p. 2) to electronic interactions and meetings, conforming with relevant legal requirements.

Bylaws of the Board

Civility

Statement and Purpose

The Woodbridge Board of Education has, as the primary objective of this policy, the promotion of mutual respect, civility, and orderly conduct in pursuing the interest and work of the Woodbridge School District. In the interest of presenting the Woodbridge Board of Education as a role model of respectful discourse, the Board encourages positive communication and discourages volatile, hostile, aggressive, and non-inclusive communications or actions. Modeling a safe, civil environment is essential to high student and staff achievement, to the free exchange of ideas central to a quality educational process, and to the development of our youth as thoughtful participants in our democracy.

It is the intent of the Board to promote mutual respect, civility, orderly conduct, and constructive problem-solving in our interactions as a Board and with the community. It is not the intent of the Board to deprive any person of his or her right to freedom of expression. The intent of this policy is to maintain, to the greatest extent reasonably possible, a safe, harassment-free setting for the Board, the administration and staff, the students, and the community to engage with each other in the best interests of the District. The Board encourages positive communication and discourages disruptive, volatile, hostile, or aggressive communications or actions.

The Woodbridge Board of Education intends to foster a culture and practice of civility in all school and school-related settings, communications, and operations. Informed debate, healthy dialogue, disagreements, and informed public opinion are to be expected and are accepted forms of interaction in a democratic society. Common norms and protocols for civil discourse and action and compliance with public meeting laws are to be expected.

Nothing in this policy shall be deemed to be in conflict with the ability of the school community to have opportunities and avenues available to express concerns and complaints about any facet of school operations or to limit an individual's ability to exercise his or her right to freedom of expression. The expectation is that this is done in a way that does not violate anyone else's rights.

The Woodbridge Board of Education seeks to promote a work environment that is safe, productive, and encouraging of the free flow of ideas without fear or intimidation, and to provide all students with appropriate role models for respectful problem solving. The Board seeks public cooperation with this endeavor.

Expectations and Procedures

Expectations of the Board of Education

The Woodbridge Board of Education and all others serving in an official District capacity, including but not limited to members of the Board of Education, District representatives, administrative representatives, community representatives, and all Committee members, are expected to treat everyone, including but not limited to fellow members, students, parents, faculty and administration, and members of the public, with courtesy, civility, respect, and inclusion.

The Woodbridge Board of Education welcomes constructive, informed, civil engagement with all members of the District.

Expectations of Interactions with the Board of Education

Community and District members engaging with the Board or any of its Committees are expected to treat each other with courtesy, civility, and respect. **This expectation applies to in-person interactions as well as electronic, remote, or virtual interactions.**

Uncivil and disruptive behaviors are not limited to, but include: disrupting or threatening to disrupt school or district operations; loud, intimidating, or offensive language; verbal or physical intimidation or bullying; harassment of District members through repeated communications, including but not limited to phone calls, e-mails, texts, social media blasts, or confrontations; threatening the health or safety of Board members, staff, or students; willfully causing property damage; disrupting the work of the Board; or any behavior that interferes with the operation of the District, its administrative offices, its school, or Board functions.

Process for Addressing Concerns of Incivility

The Board of Education reserves the right to censor incivility through:

- Use of parliamentary procedure to conduct the work of the Board on agenda topics, enter into recess, or enter into adjournment.
- Asking the disrupting party to leave the premises or meeting.
- Reaching out to law enforcement for any party refusing to leave or causing an unsafe environment.
- **Consistent with State statute, terminating the electronic meeting attendance of a disrupting party until such time as the party complies with the expectations of this policy.**

Policy adopted:

WOODBIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Woodbridge, Connecticut